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Founders' Day Speaker

John Updike to Launch Grand Opening of The Ames Library at IWU

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. --Twice the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, John Updike, a prolific and respected American author will be the keynote speaker at Illinois Wesleyan University's Founders' Day Convocation on Monday, Feb. 11., kicking off IWU's grand opening of The Ames Library.

Updike's presentation, "Readings Not Totally Unsited to Founders' Day," will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Shirk Performance Arena, 302 E. Emerson St., Bloomington, where he will receive a degree of doctor of humane letters, honoris causa.

The convocation, celebrating the 1850 founding of the university, is free and open to the public.

Updike is most famous for his quartet of novels, which include *Rabbit, Run* (1960), *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit is Rich* (1981), and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990), chronicling four decades of American life through the eyes of Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom.

Updike has written more than 70 books of poetry, fiction, drama and non-fiction. In his so-called *Scarlet Letter Trilogy*, Updike reworked Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous novel about adultery from the viewpoint of each of the principle characters.

Born in Reading, Pennsylvania in 1932, Updike attended Harvard University and the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Arts in Oxford. In 1955, Updike began working for *The New Yorker* and two years later moved to Massachusetts to dedicate himself to poetry and fiction.

Alfred A. Knopf Inc., published Updike's first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair* in 1959. Updike has worked with the same publisher ever since and has consequently published over 40 volumes, including 17 novels, 11 collections of short stories and *The Centaur*, (1963) winner of the 1963 National Book Award for Fiction; *Couples*, (1968) exploring the world of suburban married couples in the mid-1960s; and *Bech: A Book* (1970), seven interrelated stories about a writer that was followed by *Bech is Back* (1982) and *Bech at Bay* (1998).

Updike's *Witches of Eastwick* inspired a movie starring Jack Nicholson, Cher, Susan Sarandon and Michelle Pfeiffer.

Updike, who over the course of his career has won all of America's major literary prizes including the American Book Award, National Book Critics Circle Awards for both fiction and criticism, has been awarded two Pulitzers.

Updike currently lives in rural Massachusetts with his wife, Martha.